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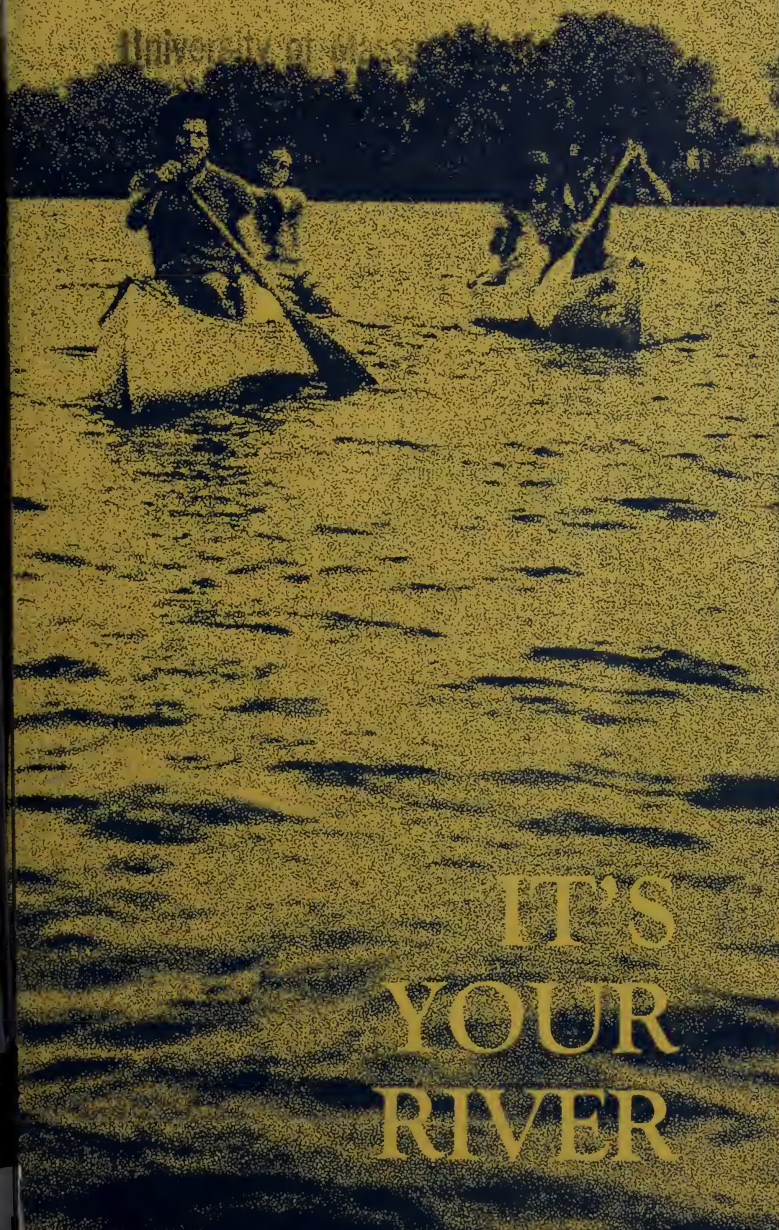


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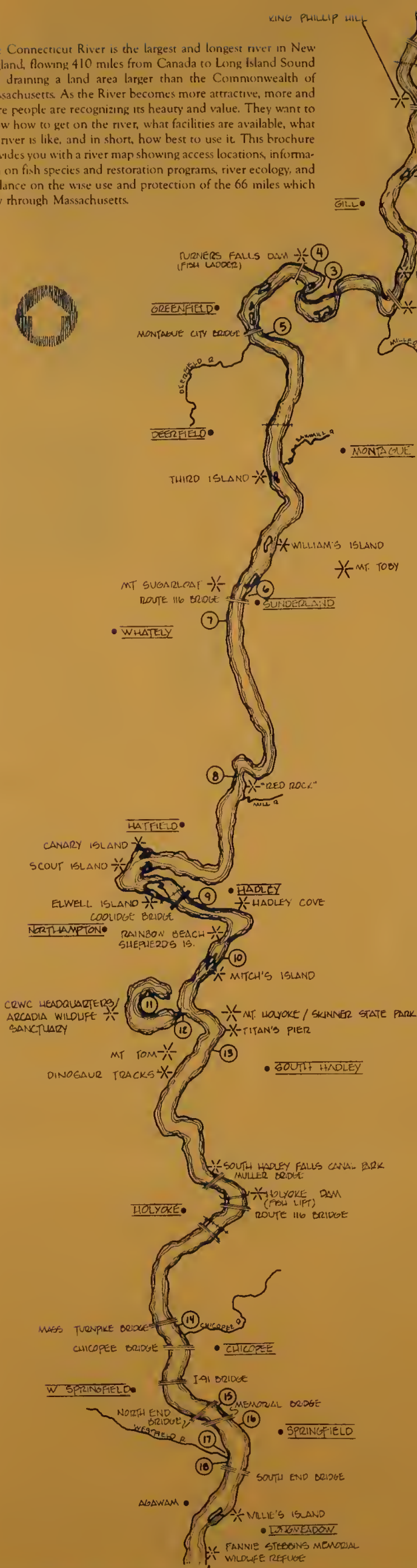
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS



IT'S YOUR RIVER

An introduction to the Connecticut River
in Western Massachusetts

The Connecticut River is the largest and longest river in New England, flowing 410 miles from Canada to Long Island Sound and draining a land area larger than the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. As the River becomes more attractive, more and more people are recognizing its beauty and value. They want to know how to get on the river, what facilities are available, what the river is like, and in short, how best to use it. This brochure provides you with a river map showing access locations, information on fish species and restoration programs, river ecology, and guidance on the wise use and protection of the 66 miles which flow through Massachusetts.



Wise River Use

More than \$700 million of taxpayers' money have gone into the Connecticut River cleanup effort. Now that the investment is paying off, it is everyone's responsibility to help protect it. By observing a few simple "rules of the river," recreational use will be more enjoyable for everyone.

Boating

Every boat operator should observe the rules of safe and courteous operation. Complete information is available from the Registry of Marine and Recreational Vehicles on Liberty Street in Springfield.

Power dams on the river at Holyoke and Turners Falls raise and lower water levels on a daily basis, creating a tide-like effect. This repeated saturation and drying of the soft river bank soils makes them sensitive to erosion by wave actions such as those produced by the wakes of motor boats. The steeper, unvegetated banks — where swallows typically nest — are the first to collapse. Trees may also be undercut and topple into the river, producing navigational hazards and accelerating erosion. Boaters should take special note of these areas and reduce speeds (and wakes) particularly while close to shore.

The daily water level changes can also create navigational problems, especially for those who are unfamiliar with the river. Sandbars can become exposed in a matter of a few hours. This is particularly true in the section above the Coolidge Bridge and near the Vermont line.

River Access

1	Pauchaug Brook, Northfield	State ramp; free
2	Munn's Ferry Boat Camping Area, Northfield	Boat access only; Northeast Utilities
3	Barton Cove Camping Area	Foot access; Northeast Utilities
4	Barton Cove, Gill	State ramp; free
5	Canoe access off Poplar Street, Montague	Primitive; free
6	Canoe & Small Boat access off School Street, Sunderland	Primitive; free
7	Herlihy Memorial Park, River Road, Whately	Primitive; free
8	State access ramp 1.4 miles North of Hatfield Center	State; primitive; free
9	Sportsman's Marina, Hadley, 584-7141	Private; Canoe Rentals
10	Mitch's Marina, Hadley, 584-9732	Boat launch; fee; fuel; dumpster
11	Oxbow Marina, Island Road, off Rte. 5, Northampton, 584-2775	Boat launch; fee; beach; picnic; food; rentals; instruction; dumpsters; dumping station
12	Oxbow entrance, off Rte. 5, Easthampton	State ramp; free
13	Brunelle's Marina, Alvord Street, So. Hadley, 536-3132	Boat launch; fee; food; picnic tables
14	Medim Street, Chicopee	State ramp; free
15	Bassett's Boat Co., Springfield	Private; boat sales
16	Riverfront Park, Springfield	Foot access; tables
17	Bondi's Island boat launch, off Rte. 5, Agawam	Ramp; free
18	Pynchon Point, off River Road, Agawam	Primitive; free

Land Ownership

Although the river itself is a public resource, users must remember that all land — shore and islands — belongs to someone. The landowner has control of access to and from the river, and persons using the river have no right to trespass or camp except by permission of the landowner. Campers risk theft, vandalism, and trespassing charges, and create liability problems for shoreline and island landowners.

Rubbish Removal

Unlike a city park, the river has no maintenance or clean-up crew for the convenience of motor boaters, fishermen and canoeists. To assure that the shorelines are kept clean, the accepted rule is to **CARRY OUT WHAT YOU CARRY IN!** Try to leave the area in better shape than you found it.

Sanitary Facilities

Dumping trash, garbage or raw sewage into the river is prohibited by state law. Boat operators with on-board toilet facilities should plug discharge outlets and periodically clean out the tank at an appropriate dumping station. "Open air latrines" are neither sanitary nor aesthetically pleasing. Whenever possible, use established bathroom facilities at marinas or public boat ramps. Where established facilities are unavailable, please bury your wastes at least 100 feet from the water's edge.

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THE RIVER

Water Quality

The quality of the Connecticut River has improved greatly over the past few years. Considerable money and effort have been spent to upgrade sewage treatment, restrict use of the river as a dump, and reduce discharges into the river. A major portion has already attained the 1983 national goal of fishable-swimmable water quality, except during low flow periods in late summer. As new wastewater treatment plants come on line, swimming will become possible as far downstream as the Holyoke Dam. Pollution below the dam, however — caused by urban runoff, sewage containing high levels of bacteria, and industrial chemical discharges — will prevent the lower section from meeting the national goal on time. According to State officials, fish caught in the Massachusetts portion of the river are generally acceptable for eating.

River Ecology

The Connecticut River in Massachusetts is a “mature” river — wide, slow, meandering. When glacial Lake Hitchcock drained some 11,000 years ago, the remaining river cut into the soft lake deposits. Wherever it encountered hard bed-rock, the river slowed and widened, cutting back and forth in large curves called **meanders**. As the river winds its leisurely way through the floodplain, the faster moving surface water erodes one side of the channel, and deposits the sand and gravel sediments downstream on the opposite side, forming **point bars**. A good example of this is Rainbow Beach in Northampton. Where the current slows, sediment can settle out in the river to form **sandbars**, which vegetation can then stabilize to form **islands**. Meanders tend to grow larger until a major flood cuts across it and carves a straighter channel. This leaves a separate body of water in the abandoned river bed — an **oxbow**. The Oxbow in Northampton was cut in 1840. An even older oxbow is now a part of Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary.

Layers of riverbank vegetation protect the shoreline and provide ideal opportunities to observe the change and diversity typical of flood-plains. Maples, willows, cottonwoods and sycamores, all well adapted to life on the floodplain, provide a canopy for shrubs, ferns, wildflowers, grasses and poison ivy, and for a wide variety of wildlife species. **Remember, it's against the law to cut or destroy vegetation along the riverbank.**

The river is a haven for birds. Migrating geese and ducks depend on coves and marshes as resting areas and feeding grounds. Summer residents include redwing blackbirds, ducks, green herons and great blue herons, and shore nesting birds such as sandpipers, kildeer, bank swallows, kingfishers — a long list for the observant. And if you're very quiet and lucky, you may see a raccoon, muskrat, squirrel, beaver, weasel, skunk or red fox.

Fish and Fish Restoration

In Colonial days, the Connecticut River teemed with salmon, shad and a wide variety of other species. Thirty-pound Atlantic Salmon were common, and thousands of barrels of Connecticut River shad were put up for Revolutionary Army troops. But dams built on the river and its tributaries blocked access to the upper valley spawning grounds. Sewage and industrial wastes added the final insult, essentially eliminating the Atlantic Salmon by 1814 and reducing shad migrations to a trickle.

The river is now clean enough to support these fish again, and fish lifts and ladders over the dams will give them access to much of their original range. Both salmon and shad are migratory, spending most of their adult lives in the ocean and returning to the river of their origin only to spawn, usually in May. Thousands of shad are now being caught here each year by commercial and

sport fishermen. To build up the population of salmon returning to the Connecticut River, adults are captured at the dams and bred in hatcheries to improve the next generation's chances for survival. The goal is to have one million shad and 40,000 salmon enter the river. Efforts on behalf of the salmon and shad are paying off for other species as well. The Connecticut River now supports the widest array of any New England river — 63 species. Those listed passed the Holyoke fish lift in 1979.

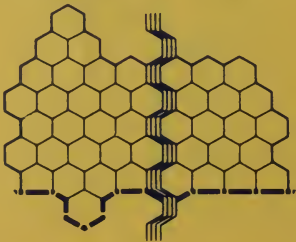
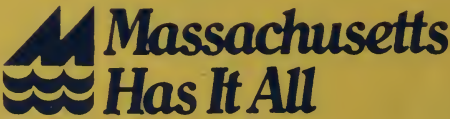
American Shad	American Eel	Northern Pike
Atlantic Salmon	Channel Catfish	Short-nose Sturgeon
Blueback Herring	Brown Bullhead	(an endangered species)
Lamprey	White Sucker	Fall Fish
Striped Bass	Yellow Perch	Black-nosed Dace
White Perch	Golden Shiner	Goldfish
Smallmouth Bass	Rock Bass	Red-breast Sunfish
Largemouth Bass	Walleye	Long-ear Sunfish
Bluegill	Carp	Chain Pickerel
Pumpkinseed	Spot-tail Shiner	Rainbow Trout
Black Crappie	Common Shiner	Brook Trout

For further information about the river contact the **Connecticut River Watershed Council**, 125 Combs Road, Easthampton, MA 01027 — 584-0057. The Council is a member-supported non-profit conservation group which deals with land conservation, education and fisheries restoration throughout the Connecticut River Valley.

Acknowledgements

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PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION

